

## the gate is broken by **CampionSayn**

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**Summary:**

None of this should have been possible, but it wasn't *impossible*.

## the gate is broken

*The impact of metal on metal, whiplash and torn skin was on July fourth, 1985.*

*A single twitch of black panic, lightning fast with green acid highlights and what could only be sepia incandescence, a decision is made. Somewhere.*

*The jolt of panic, startled breathing, trying not to scream, confusion and three people out of time follows five minutes to midnight October thirtieth, 1984.*

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He shook, rattled like the tail of a snake or an acorn down and lost among the wreckage of dead leaves his Camaro blew through all along the quiet, quiet roads of the Hawkins from Before, and tried not to cry--

*(Like a little bitch, always the disappointment aren't you Billy?)*

in a breakdown in front of--

*(She's so small, she's so angry, how did he never notice this before?)*

Max. He needed to drop her off at school.

*(Have your breakdown later, idiot.)*

None of this should have been possible, but it wasn't **impossible**; this he knew, now, so long into being connected to something from a world that sat below their own like black mold holding sentience and

waiting patiently.

The music volume he kept down low, no cigarette lit and lighting up his lungs (*he couldn't seem to shake off the memory of being trapped in wet heat surrounded by cold tile, chances too high he'd vomit if he remembered breathing something warm in*) and eyes on the road at a reasonable speed all the way until he parked in front of the middle school and allowed his eyes to wander the faces, dozens and dozens he didn't know, looking for familiars among the background ciphers.

There. There. There. And there. It was impossible to miss them in those ridiculous costumes that were actually very detailed, now that he was looking closely.

He saw no flashing of recognition, no fear at the sight of him in his car promising swiftness and anger. Just three of the boys Max kept company with Before glancing with barely there attention when Sinclair paused mid-stride at the sight of Max in the Camaro.

How did he never notice that stupid look on his face, like a devoted puppy, innocent and loyal and blindly kind?

He had to look away, blinking sea colored eyes behind his shades, drawing a breath and tilting his head to look over at his (*she's not even yours, not really, Neil made you look out for her/SHUT UP, FUCK YOU*) little sister, expecting him to tell her the usual before dismissing her.

Not this time.

"Did you bring your costume?"

She blinked once, twice at him, face crinkled at his voice (*he couldn't*

*make it work right since he woke up in his own bed screaming bloody murder a split second after he'd closed his eyes after that thing used him to try and demolish Max and the girl, and the others with his body jerking when Harrington rammed him; choking and bringing up vomit when he'd felt his own hands, skin, body his own again and his room unlined in, boxes still packed at the foot of his bed "**Don't fucking open**" scrawled over each one) and her eyes jumping to his knuckles tight white on the steering wheel.*

Not this time.

He didn't have enough energy to even *pretend* and ease into this insane difference, this sudden change in his behavior towards her.

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Robin knew that Steve's breakup with Nancy Wheeler, the first time around, had been bad, given that Tommy H. and his hypocrite girlfriend spread rumors like wildfire with barely a scrap of information...

Nancy drunk at Halloween being taken home by Byers after Steve left following Hargrove taking title of Keg King his first party in Hawkins.

Nancy having a talk with Steve the next day during basketball practice where Billy was goading him the whole time without a shirt.

Nancy coming to school the next week and holding hands, whispering and giving heart eyes at Byers while Steve gave the both of them space.

All this Robin knew, even as a loner, and Billy knew because he was constantly on top of Steve until graduation (*when his being an asshole was at its peek, she realized, because afterwards he'd have nobody else to foist his anger and frustration on*).

But *knowing* it was bad from far away and *seeing it* through a window while Steve martyred himself to being dumped again to preserve some of the original timeline so Nancy could be with Jonathan here as well...

She and Billy didn't dare make sound or movement, breathing slowed like rabbits before freezing under exposure to the elements as the sight of Steve holding Nancy's hair, trying to comfort her, and then just getting laid into verbally and *with feeling* by the much shorter person in the soon-to-be-dead relationship, glaring at him with vitriol and drunken spite, repeating what Robin assumed was the word "Bullshit" and something like "pretending" and "love" with Steve's face (*totally sober, they three had planned this and didn't want it ruined by his brain being treacherous in attempting to make things better*) stoic and accepting when *she finally stopped*.

He said something back, also containing the word "love" before she snapped (*slurred*) a final "*bullshit*" and he left like they'd planned; to find Jonathan, ask him to take Nancy home, go out the back of the house and meet them where they'd parked Billy's Camaro.

Robin felt an awful sense of blinding white rage when Jonathan went into the well lit bathroom not two minutes later, rubbing her back and getting toilet paper to wipe the spit and vomit off the side of her mouth, before Robin crushed the empty Cola can she'd been holding and only just noticed Billy pulling at her arm to lead her away from the window.

Steve was waiting for them under a thick bodied tree at the edge of the property, the light from the house and the sounds of drunken teens goofing off a mere echo that far away. His shoulders sagged, his hair limp as he'd forgone his usual routine that morning and evening in favor of psyching himself up for this horrible gut punch of what would have to transpire for things to move forward; but he didn't even try to pretend he hadn't cried a little, without sound but with plenty of salt water, before the two got there and they three walked to the black car.

They were three miles away before Robin spoke, turning down the radio and looking at Steve leaning in the back seat, defeated and exhausted with no front put up for them like the rest of Hawkins, "Was it as bad as last time?"

"...I dunno. About the same, really. At least this time I saw it coming."

"Don't suppose you wanna tell us about it?"

He took out his lighter and flicked it, titling his head away and giving directions towards where he was about ninety percent sure the kids would be trick or treating before Will collapsed and Mike became a huge pain in the ass.

Which was about as much as a hesitant but solid 'no' as they were going to get.

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"...That you love me?"

This was the worst part. The part that he'd had to explain to Robin and Billy in Steve's huge, empty house, that was literally perfect for

three teenagers who had lived to see monsters and prove the existence of time travel because Steve's parents had only come back twice in '84 and neither of those times were in November; this he'd explained while making the three of them pancakes and good coffee after waking up feeling like shit, showering and once more forgoing his hair routine so there would be enough hot water for Robin who literally was in and out in five minutes and Billy who practically scrubbed himself raw under boiling spray.

Nancy had to admit in her silence and inaction that Steve wasn't what she wanted, wasn't good enough.

Steve already knew that, but he needed to let her go through the motions.

This was important... This was important... This was important...

*(He couldn't believe he had to do this again.)*

And there Nancy stood, wide eyes watering and hands clenched at her sides, and no words coming out as he counted to ten.

But... Well, he could at least not be a complete, jealous douchebag this time and give her a more practical out so she wouldn't feel like she was cheating on him or anything when... **JONATHAN**...whatever happened.

He took a breath, took her right hand to give it a little squeeze, and then let her go, "It's okay, Nance. You can go. You can stop pretending. I get it. If you wanna leave, you can. Not like I can keep you if you don't want to stay."

She finally looked up at him when he finished, breathing stilled as

she swallowed to keep from crying when he just smiled sadly back at her, not moving to follow when she nodded her head and was the one to walk away (*this time*).

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When they three, they "proud and happy" few, flashed backwards through time and space somehow found each other again, it was with the approximate feeling of sitting through a foreign film at the theater and waiting for the shoe to drop before absolute catharsis or disappointment sung through their veins.

Steve had gone looking for Robin, rather than lingering in his car with Nancy going over his essay for college (*he already knew it was shit, he didn't need to go through that again*) and being fool enough to say 'I love you' when he knew anything she said at that point would be sweet, but forced and he'd honestly rather throw himself into the quarry bed.

He'd parted ways with the former love of his young life and headed towards the music room, but stumbled half-steps by the bathroom when the door slammed and he smelled cheap cigarette's and heard labored breathing.

He'd blinked, and known, and spun back around to enter, locking the door behind him and taking a moment to listen to Billy Hargrove vomit in the toilet, shaky and gasping and barely getting anything more up than acrid bile, before sitting next to the ceramic throne with his arms wrapped around his legs, rocking back and forth.

Steve had tapped on the stall twice, then knocked three times, expecting the, "Fuck off!" filled less with embarrassment and more with shame and revulsion than he was used to.

"Am I dreaming," he started, gentle as he had to be and would have



to be more-so again with the kids, that old familiar lilt in his voice, "Or is that you, Hargrove?"

*(The footsteps on trembling legs barreling down the hallway towards them, closed in the boy's bathroom, and about three minutes from nearly ramming the door down with an equally trembling torso or shoulder, was Robin. Steve knew, because... He just knew. Another something he would have to get used to, knowing more and feeling more--especially with these two.*

*But not just yet.)*

"Y-Yeah," Billy replied, finishing the phrase and picking up something new, or old, or just different this time around; he picked himself off the floor as well and didn't hesitate to unlock and open the stall, eye contact made without hostility--almost like relief, "It's me; don't cream your pants."

#### **Author's Note:**

My brain: I wanna make Steve, Robin and Billy a trio.

Me: Okay, but I'm making Steve sad first.

My Brain: *\*claps\**